

SOUTH FORK RESERVOIR



ANGLER AND FISH SURVEY INFORMATION
Jacob Stoller- Fisheries Biologist, Elko Field Office
60 Youth Center Road. Elko, NV 89801 - (775) 777-2398

General information: South Fork Reservoir is one of the most recreated and fished water bodies in the Eastern Region. The reservoir is a popular fishery for trout in the spring and fall while providing excellent bass fishing as the reservoir's water temperature warms in the summer. Black bass reach lengths up to 21 inches (6 to 8 lbs) and Wipers reach lengths up to 25 inches (6 to 12 lbs). Rainbow Trout, Bowcutt Trout (Rainbow x Cutthroat), Brown Trout, and Channel Catfish are stocked regularly in the reservoir. Trout range in size from 9 to 25 inches and Channel Catfish range in size between 15 to 32 inches.

Location: Elko County, 10 miles south of Elko off state Highway 228. Use our FishNV tool (<https://fish.wildlifenv.com/>) to find waters near you, and buy your fishing license at ndowlicensing.com.

Size: 1,640 surface acres at a 40,000 acre-feet maximum capacity. Maximum depth is 67 feet.

Management: Nevada Department of Wildlife manages this fishery as a Trophy Warm Water Fishery and a Quality Cold Water Fishery. Nevada Division of Water Resources manages the recreation water right, and Nevada State Parks manages the facilities and campsites surrounding the reservoir.

Amenities and General Info

- The South Fork Recreation Area is managed by Nevada State Parks.
- Campsites are available all year for a fee.
- RV camping is available with some sites having utility hook-ups.
- Flush restrooms and showers are available.
- 2 boat ramps are available.

Fishing Regulations

- Season is open all year, any hour of the day or night.
- Limit is 5 trout, 1 black bass, 1 wiper, and 5 channel catfish per day. Two-day possession limit.
- Black bass fishing from March 1st to June 30th is catch and release only.
- Minimum size for black bass and white bass hybrids is 15" total length.

Previous Stocking

2024

Rainbow	62,173
Catfish	9,200
Brown	32,590

2023

Rainbow	107,465
Wiper	350
Catfish	16,500
Brown	7,077

2022

Rainbow	66,275
Wiper	500
Catfish	7,500

Fishing Notes

- Most bait such as nightcrawlers, salmon eggs, and Power Bait are successful for trout.
- Midge patterns and balanced leech patterns can be highly effective for trout when fished under a strike indicator.
- Throwing soft plastics, crankbaits, and spinner baits around structures are typically successful for bass.
- Night fishing for catfish using chicken livers, nightcrawlers, and large shrimp can be best for channel catfish.
- Bait or jigs tipped with bait such as nightcrawlers can be productive while ice fishing.

2025 Fishing Forecast

Water level

Snowpack conditions for the Ruby Mountains at the beginning of 2025 was about normal at 93% of median and South Fork Reservoir is currently around 94% capacity. With current projections the water level is expected remain constant throughout the spring but will lose some water to evaporation. The main boat ramp should be accessible until the lake freezes over.

Trout

In 2024, a total of 94,763 Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout with an average size of 8.7 inches were stocked in South Fork Reservoir. Rainbow Trout are the most abundant trout species in the reservoir, and they average around 16 inches long. The larger Rainbow Trout typically range between 22 to 26 inches long and weigh over 5 lbs. Catch rates for Brown Trout are lower compared to Rainbow Trout because they are stocked at lower densities. However, Brown Trout are typically bigger averaging 18 inches long. The best trout fishing will be during the early spring once the ice comes off and the temperature of the reservoir starts to warm. Fall fishing can be good for trout too. Average to slightly higher than average catch rates are expected in 2025 due to the number of fish stocked in recent years and current reservoir capacity.

Black Bass and Wiper

Black Bass (Largemouth and Smallmouth) are a naturally reproducing fish species in South Fork Reservoir. In 2025, bass fishing should be good to excellent for size and quality. No Wipers were stocked in South Fork Reservoir in 2024, but Wipers stocked in 2022 and 2023 should be returning to creel in 2025. The few remnant Wipers from past stocking events (prior to 2022) are expected to be larger than 20 inches and weigh more than 8 lbs.

Channel Catfish

Channel Catfish were stocked in 2022, 2023, 2024, with an additional 10,000 four-inch Channel Catfish scheduled to be stocked in 2025. Catfish typically range between 15 to 32 inches with the state record of 32 lbs. 7 oz, being caught in 2011. The best time to catch catfish is during the night using smelly baits such as chicken livers and large shrimp.

Water Records

Rainbow Trout	9 lbs 2 oz	Largemouth Bass	8 lbs 2 oz
Bowcutt Trout	6 lbs 14 oz	Smallmouth Bass	6 lbs 4 oz
Brown Trout	11 lbs 3 oz	Wiper	16 lbs 4 oz
Channel Catfish	32 lbs 7 oz		